

Thoughts From Other Minds:

Holy Scripture is God-breathed **and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness**. The one follows from the other since all God's creative works are useful to human beings. Scripture is God's ... appointed means for human instruction and discipline. Scripture has a definite utilitarian purpose which Paul now sets out under four distinct but related functions. Properly understood and handled, scripture impacts on the full extent of human need, and works like a remedial medicine bringing progressively enlightenment, self-knowledge, moral correction and wholeness. Scripture is useful for:

- teaching about God, his creation, human nature created and fallen, and the way of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- rebuking us about our sinful selves, for exposing particular sins and faults, along with all those dishonest reasonings that we use to rationalise our wrongdoing.
- correcting our lives by pointing out the right way to live, and by presenting supportive arguments and promises ... to implement the necessary changes.
- training us in righteousness by empowering us to recognise and choose what is good and to reject what is evil, so that we begin to live in ways that are pleasing to God and useful to others.

Contrary to the claims of post-modern culture, the Creator God has put into our hands a complete guide to the meaning of life and the living of it. The Scriptures show us that we can have certainty about the ultimate issues of life. The God of the Scriptures never meant us to live without knowing, so he has given us his God-breathed Word which the men and women of the third millennium, like those of the first and second, can access and read to find the way of salvation through believing in Jesus Christ as he is represented in its pages.

The whole Scripture has been God-breathed so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (verse 17). The man of God in the Old Testament was the prophetic messenger (2 Chron. 25:7, 9). In the New Testament this expression refers in the first place to the Christian leader who teaches God's Word and acts with authority (1 Tim. 6:11). But the servant of the Lord will never be complete until and unless he reads himself constantly into the text of Scripture and responds to the voice of God speaking there. Timothy (and the modern Christian leader) will find there all the knowledge, encouragement and resources he needs for effective leadership. They will train him to be practically useful in doing good as every opportunity arises. The leader will only display his personal obedience to the Scriptures when he exemplifies in his own life the good works that the Scriptures themselves everywhere enjoin and inspire (1 Tim. 4:12). The real test of knowledge of the Scriptures is our productivity level in doing good works.

Douglas J W Milne, 1. 2. *Timothy and Titus*, pp. 169-171.

Camperdown Noorat Terang Presbyterian Charge

16 October 2016

Sermon: "George Wishart, Scottish Reformer and Martyr"

Scripture: John 8:31-59

Sermon Notes

Introduction: We remember that great 16th century revival of evangelical Christianity we call the Reformation not to stir up ancient animosities but to thank God for the gospel and those who stood for it against its enemies, and to affirm our own commitment to believe the gospel, to contend for it, and to tell it to others.

1. Who was George Wishart?

Among the many who suffered for the gospel in Scotland in those days George Wishart was particularly influential. Born (c. 1513) he embraced Reformed teachings while studying in Germany.

Teaching Greek in Scotland, when summoned by John Hepburn, Bishop of Brechin, for distributing Greek New Testaments Wishart fled to England. Accused of heresy, he went to the Continent, where he translated the first confession of the Swiss Protestant Churches into English.

He returned to Cambridge in 1542 and to Scotland the following year, where he preached as an evangelist at Montrose and Dundee; he also preached in Ayrshire under the protection of protestant nobles; he was recalled to Dundee, where plague had broken out; afterwards he returned to Montrose.

Travelling to Edinburgh to speak at a provincial synod of the church he was captured at Ormiston House, Ormiston, imprisoned in Elphinstone Tower and treacherously handed over to Cardinal Beaton by the Earl of Bothwell; Beaton had him transferred to Edinburgh and then St Andrews, where he was tried and condemned.

The next day (1 March) led forth to die outside the main entrance to the castle he prayed and commended his spirit to God his Heavenly Father. He then urged the crowd not to be offended at the Word of God on account of the tortures they saw prepared for him, and to love the Word of salvation, and to suffer for the gospel.

He declared that he believed his soul would sup with his Saviour that night, and urged them to exhort their clergy to acquaint themselves with the Word of God, so that they might be ashamed and learn to do good; he prayed for those who through ignorance had condemned him, forgave one of executioners and was put to death.

2. Why did George Wishart die?

Foxe's record of his trial shows that like Hamilton he was condemned for maintaining the authority of Scripture against the authority of the Church. Here is a sampling of the charges brought against him and his replies:

Accused of deceiving people and despising the church in that he had not heeded the bishop's command to cease preaching, he replied that he read in scripture 'We ought to obey God rather than man'.

Accused of being a heretic for saying "that a priest at the altar saying mass was as a fox in summer wagging his tail," he said "God searches the heart, and those who truly worship him must worship him in sincerity. Such is my teaching."

Accused of being a heretic for teaching that there are not seven sacraments, he replied "I believe in those sacraments only which were instituted by Christ, and are set forth in the Holy Gospel".

Accused of being a heretic for teaching that men ought to confess sin to God and not to a priest, he replied, "I teach, my lord, that priestly confession has no warrant, but that confession to God is blessed".

Accused of being a heretic for teaching that it was essential that a man should understand the nature of baptism, he replied, "My lord, none of you would transact business with one to whose language you were a stranger. So the parent should understand what in baptism he undertakes for his child".

Charged as a 'False heretic, traitor and thief' for saying that the sacrifice of the altar was but a piece of bread and that the consecration of the Eucharist a rite of superstition' he said he had related an incident in which a Jew accused Christians of worshipping images and adoring a piece of bread as their God.

Accused of denying the freedom of the will and of teaching that man cannot of himself do neither good nor evil, he answered "Not so. I teach in the words of Holy Scripture: 'Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;' and, 'If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed'".

Scripture is the Word of God, inspired and sufficient and 'the rule of faith and life' (WCF 1.2; 2 Tim 3:15-17). The Roman church believes that the Word of God is the Scripture and the Tradition of the Church and claims an exclusive role to interpret this 'Word of God' 'in an authoritative and trustworthy manner.'

Wishart died because he defied the authority of the church to rest his faith and his teaching on the scripture alone, for he saw that many of the authoritative teachings of the Church contradict scripture and therefore cannot be from God.

3. What did George Wishart do?

In life he did much to advance the cause of the Reformation in Scotland, being renowned for his generosity to the poor and his nobility towards his enemies. During the plague he served the sick and dying regardless of the danger of infection, and he spoke of Christ and his finished work so many found peace with God ere they died.

His death led to widespread mourning and indignation and a more thorough study of the doctrine he taught and hastened the victory of the Reformation in Scotland. We easily believe that living is winning and dying is losing—but in Christ's kingdom dying is winning, when it is for him and his truth! May this victory be ours!

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My Notes:

Questions for Reflection:

1. Read and reflect upon John 8:31-59, keeping in mind the conflict between the Church and the Reformers in the 16th century over matters such as the authority of the scripture vs. the authority of the Church.
2. How does v. 31 bear on these key issues of the Reformation? What distinguishes Jesus' real disciples from others?
3. What puts Jesus' teaching and authority in a different category from other teaching and other authority, including the authority and teaching of the church (vs. 32, 51) and, in the context of the passage as a whole, why?
4. Read and reflect upon 2 Timothy 3:10-17, keeping in mind the same issues as mentioned in Q. 1 above.
5. How does v. 16a teach us to place the words of scripture in the same category as Jesus' words?
6. How do these verses teach that scripture is sufficient and clear apart from non-scriptural traditions and the teaching of the Church? (see especially vs. 15b and 17).